

§46 HOBBS AND THE ABSOLUTE
STATE

and benefit. There is no sentiment about the process. What induces a man to become subject to another is fear and nothing else.

Political society, or as we say a commonwealth, begins when it is thus agreed that a majority, or a few, or one, shall represent the wiS of all. Government, whatever its nature, must have the power of coercion, since where there is no coercion there is no fear of consequences. Thus in every state there is an absolute and indivisible sovereign who can neither be punished nor resisted. He cannot give away any part of his sovereignty, even if he wishes. .Mixed government, the supremacy of the legislature, judiciary and executive, each in its allotted sphere, is impracticable. The sovereign

claims obedience till his death or defeat. Though monarchy • is not the only possible form of government, it is the least subject to passion or dissolution by civil war. To avoid uncertainty in the succession the sovereign may name his successor. -He must also decide controversies in religion, controlling, not indeed the consciences of men, but their words and actions ; for he is the immediate ruler of the Church under Christ, and all other authorities are subordinate to him. Before Hobbes the doctrine of contract had been the charter of liberty, even of rebellion. If the ruler broke the bond, he must be resisted. This conception was now turned upside down. The contract was a surrender as well as a guarantee. In a chapter on the " Causes of Rebellion" he denies that in certain cases the sovereignty may be resisted. If any exceptions are made to the rule of obedience, the door is opened to confusion and peril. Sedition is the death of the commonwealth.

Though there was no reference to the political issues of the

day it is not surprising that the little treatise impressed its readers, for its doctrines challenged both the parties which were girding themselves for battle. The gospel of indivisible sovereignty, and of law as the command of the sovereign, had been proclaimed by Bodin as the way of salvation during the ferocious wars of religion in France; but the idea was unfamiliar in England. From the champions of Divine Right Hobbes was separated by his cold-blooded rationalism, his derivation of monarchy from the will of the people, his refusal to concern himself with the legal title of the sovereign. He agrees with James I in *The True Law of Free Monarchies* that the ruler is required by God to rule wisely and well, and